



SWA GROUP ANNOUNCE APPROVAL OF WINNING DESIGN FOR THE SANDY HOOK PERMANENT MEMORIAL

Project to take shape under the watchful eyes of two young SWA designers



Rendering courtesy SWA Group.

San Francisco, CA (June 15, 2021) – International landscape architecture, planning, and urban design firm [SWA Group](#) announce the approval of their design, “[The Clearing](#),” which after a five-year process of site selection and development of memorial criteria, was selected unanimously by the Sandy Hook Permanent Memorial Commission among 189 international design submissions and with overwhelming support from the families of the victims. The Memorial will be implemented on a donated five-acre site in Newtown, Connecticut.

The groundbreaking of the Sandy Hook Permanent Memorial will take place in August 2021. The opening is slated to take place on December 14, 2022, the 10th Anniversary of the tragedy.

The 1.8-acre Memorial has been designed as a place to remember and celebrate the lives that were lost at Sandy Hook Elementary, a tragedy of profound dimensions. How can a place honor these lives, as the Sandy Hook Permanent Memorial Commission urged, for the families who grieve the loss of a loved one and for the many in the community, and beyond, whose lives were touched in ways that are hard to describe or quantify?

These were the questions facing landscape designers Daniel Affleck and Ben Waldo of SWA Group's San Francisco studio when they responded to a call for design proposals and ultimately responded with a vision that won the trust of the families who lost their children and loved ones.

Three hallmarks of the design include the circle, the path, and the tree. A circling network of paths takes the visitor through a woodland and meadows. The connecting paths allow the walker to experience the space in their own way and at their own pace before arriving at the center, and are meant to honor the process of grieving and remembrance. The Memorial Clearing is framed by. In the center, a water feature sits in a granite basin. The edge of the feature is engraved with the names of the victims. Water flows spiral inwards towards a planter at the center, where a young tree, the "Sacred Sycamore," is planted at the center of the pool to symbolize the growth of the community. The motion of the water embraces the tree and captures the energy, form, and cycle of the landscape around it. Visitors are encouraged to give a candle or a flower to the water, which will carry the offering across the space in an act of bridging the deceased and the living.

"We wanted to acknowledge that the healing process does not end, but continues and grows," said co-designer Daniel Affleck, who grew up nearby in West Hartford, Connecticut. "This finds its expression in both the plantings and reflecting pool, which reflect the seasonality of nature and constant change through the movement of water."

"Our path moves in gentle circles through a flowering woodland which celebrates the lives of the victims, and eventually arrives at a central memorial 'clearing' where the community can gather in love for those lost," continues co-designer Ben Waldo. "The path has no true beginning or end, which allows visitors to experience the space at their own pace and in their own way, while always bringing them closer together."

Team members supporting the realization of this vision include JMC for civil engineering, GNCB for structural engineering, Atelier Ten for lighting, Fluidity, a water feature design company, and Artemis a local landscape architect, whose scope is focused on planting and construction administration.

A selection of visuals may be accessed [here](#).

About SWA Group

SWA is a world-renowned landscape architecture, planning, and urban design firm celebrated for its creativity, responsiveness, and design excellence. Our work gives new life to outdoor spaces at multiple scales – from public plazas to waterfronts to entire city districts – harnessing natural systems while enhancing the unique characteristics of each setting. SWA has studios in Dallas, Houston, Laguna Beach, Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco, Sausalito and Shanghai. For more information, please visit www.swagroup.com.

About Sandy Hook Permanent Memorial Commission

The Sandy Hook Permanent Memorial Commission was appointed in 2013 by the Board of Selectmen for the Town of Newtown, Connecticut. Its charge was to address questions about whether there should be a permanent memorial to honor those whose lives were lost at Sandy Hook School in December 2012, and, if so, what and where it should be and how it should be funded.

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